

# THE BUSHLAND BULLETIN<sup>©</sup>

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## *Streaked Rock Orchid Found in Canterbury-Bankstown*

In the last issue of the Bushland Bulletin we reported the recent discovery of a rare and undescribed Sun Orchid on the north side of the Georges River by Darryl McKay. Another new orchid for the Canterbury-Bankstown area was recently found by Karlo Taliana in Georges River National Park. This is Streaked Rock Orchid (*Dendrobium striolatum*), an epiphytic species found growing mainly on rocks and common on parts of the Woronora Plateau, around the Hawkesbury River, in

the Blue Mountains and ranges extending down into East Gippsland. The Australasian Virtual Herbarium, though, records no collections of this species on the north side of the Georges River and only a single collection (Ryde 1921) between the Sydney coast and the foot of the Blue Mountains. Karlo reports that he only found a single clump of this beautiful species growing on a rock in thick bush. To protect the plant, its precise location can't be made public as it would be very

vulnerable to plant thieves who, regrettably, still pilfer from our bushland. A clump of another orchid rare in our area, *Cymbidium suave*, was not long ago seen in the possession of people who had pulled out of the bush at Picnic Point. We ask anyone who sees plant thieves at work to report it immediately to the local police and National Parks and Wildlife Service. *Below: photo of Streaked Rock Orchid in Georges River National Park, by Karlo Taliana.*



### Save Mount Gilead

The Society has submitted its objections to the Mount Gilead Development Application for residential development on part of the historic Cowpastures landscape. Not only will this development damage the widely recognised landscape and heritage values of the area, but it will also have negative impacts on water and air quality adding to the urban heat island effect and pollution for Campbelltown and its suburbs. Preserving the naturalness of this scenic and historic area should be the priority.

Development of Mount Gilead as a residential estate will lead to increased traffic and danger from trucks on Appin Road. The flow-on effect of traffic impact will have consequences for Appin, taking 1 hour on weekends for what was once a 5-minute journey.

The development will destroy

critically endangered Cumberland Plain Woodland and Shale Sandstone Transition forest, requiring 50,000 cubic metres (15,000 truckloads) of imported fill that will ruin natural soil profiles and drainage regimes and introduce pathogens such as *Phytophthora cinnamomi* to cause native vegetation dieback with the potential to infect Noorumba Reserve and the Beulah biobanking area.

Urban development in this rural green field location will increase problems of salinity and erosion, contaminate the Nepean River and its tributaries as well as the adjacent Noorumba Reserve. The development will destroy the north-south koala/wildlife corridor and habitat between Noorumba Reserve and the Beulah biobanking site. It will also block the east-west koala/wildlife corridor between Nepean and Georges Rivers.

BBS asks that the development application be rejected and that

steps be taken to protect the existing ecological and environmental values of the area.

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Regrettably, our plea and those of many others are falling on deaf ears. The Georges River Environmental Alliance informs us of the following: *“Lend Lease are now set to move the bulldozers in to smash, drain and bury this gracious landscape. Soon it will be a transformed moonscape of bare earth. Nine farm dams and the moist stream traces between them will be drained and filled. It will be transformed thereafter into a ruthlessly exposed and uniform expanse of the rooves of 1,700 dwellings, Stage One of Figtree Hill. The ancient paddock trees, one is estimated as 600 years old, and koala nurturing forest remnants are going too. The Local Planning Panel of Campbelltown City Council approved this just before Xmas, maybe they thought we wouldn’t notice!*



*The Mt Gilead estate is the shortest link between the George’s and Nepean River. It should be declared a publicly accessible Regional Park, maintaining its rural and wildlife nurturing functions. All through the region the government is compulsorily acquiring private properties for roadworks. Why don’t they take this one, in the public interest, for much needed recreational, cooling and breathing open space?” #*

*Mt. Gilead landscape, pic courtesy Georges River Environmental Alliance*

## Filling the Milperra Floodplain

by Col Gibson

In 2018 the Local Planning Panel and, subsequently, C-BC Council, rejected the Riverlands development application on a range of grounds, not least the vast amount of fill the developer proposes to spread over the site. The LPP's objections included: "a) the large amount of fill that is proposed to approximately three-quarters of the site on the western side; b) a proper justification for this fill has not been provided; c) the importation of the fill is not required in order to facilitate ground levels to satisfy riverine flooding impacts; d) the nature of the terrain provides no justification for the fill; e) the extent of the fill is inconsistent with various LEP and DCP controls; f) the extent to which the fill removes valuable storage

*from the stormwater catchment from riverine floodplains; g) the effect of the fill on the long term survival of trees."*

These would appear to be very solid grounds for concern, so why is Council party to a Voluntary Planning Agreement (VPA) with the developer that gives the developer a kilometre long road extension (Keys Parade) on the floodplain? Why, when it is apparent that vast amounts of fill will be required to raise the road above the 1–100-year flood level? And where is this fill going to come from? Could it be from the massive piles the owner of Riverlands has illegally imported to the site (for which he was fined but not ordered to remove) still sitting on the northern side of the property? What use might they have in mind for it?

We know that Council is getting something in exchange for the

road easement — a 20-metre-wide kilometre long landscaping zone along the foreshore. This exchange is a principle component of the VPA, but it provides no security for the floodplain's internal natural wetland drainage system which includes Endangered Sydney Swamp Oak Floodplain Forest adjoining the river, nor for the Endangered Green and Golden Bell Frog found during a survey of the road easement not long ago. This species is known to forage up to 1.5 kilometres and back in a night, so its local range would include the whole of the floodplain in the vicinity. This is the only known population of G&G Bell Frog in the Local Government Area. The construction of Keys Parade will have knock on effects that will necessitate re-engineering the floodplain's internal wetland system and destruction of much of the existing habitat. *(cont p. 4)*



*A small section of the fill piled up beside the river near Riverlands*

Fill is the fashion in Milperra at the moment. Vast amounts are being spread over the south west precinct of the Airport to facilitate warehouse and other developments. A couple of years ago, Council, when under management of an administrator before amalgamation, approved filling to permit the Flower Power development on a site zoned Recreation Private. The owner is now trying to get it rezoned to Business. Fill is currently being deposited on part of Ashford Reserve used by the model aeroplane enthusiasts. What the long term plan here is we don't know.

The problem with the VPA is that, like the Riverlands DA rejected by the Local Planning Panel, it does not comply with the objectives of the 2015 Bankstown Local Environmental Plan or the Biodiversity Plan, by contradicting the following clauses of the BLEP, 1.2 Aims of the Plan (2):

**Clause b): to protect and enhance the landform and vegetation, especially foreshores and bushland, in a way that maintains the biodiversity values and landscape amenities of Bankstown.**

- The VPA and procedural subdivision approve a road on the floodplain which will require the introduction of vast amounts of fill to cause permanent alterations to the natural drainage system and associated wetlands. This will facilitate the destruction of hundreds of native trees, cause modifications to remnant natural wetlands and wildlife habitat and pave the way for intrusions into foreshore

mangrove and Swamp Oak Forest. All this in an area recognised by Council as a core wildlife corridor in its Biodiversity Management Plan.

**Clause c): to protect the natural, cultural and built heritage of Bankstown.**

- This clause is an undertaking to the people of Bankstown to protect natural heritage, not destroy or trade it off. Recently the Society was reassured by the Mayor *"the City of Canterbury-Bankstown is committed to protecting our native trees."* (Mayor Khal Asfour to BBS, 2-2-2018). No protection measures for native trees are mentioned in the VPA.

**Clause e): to minimise the risk to the community in areas subject to environmental hazards by restricting development in sensitive areas.**

- As the floods of February 2020 and March 2021 have reminded everyone, Riverlands is situated in a vulnerable flood zone. Filling the floodplain for roads and other developments are risks that should not be permitted. This essentially was the advice given by the Moorebank-Milperra Floodway Study for the City of Bankstown by the NSW Public Works Department in September 1983: *"The Moorebank-Milperra Floodway is a major flood risk area and is arguably one of the worst floodways in the State. In view of the extent of current development in the area a major flood could be expected to cause extensive property damage and to endanger lives."* In light of this advice it would be irresponsible for Council to continue to

approve filling on the floodplain.

**Clause j): to concentrate intensive trip-generating activities in locations most accessible to rail transport to reduce car dependence and to limit the potential for additional traffic in the road network.**

- Riverlands is three kilometres from the nearest rail hub at East Hills Station; Bankstown Station is distant three times that. This is a development that will have the opposite effect to the one espoused in this clause. The VPA approves new roads and intersections that will throw large numbers of extra vehicles onto local road networks in a quiet residential area not designed to cater for them.

**Clause k): to consider the cumulative impact of the development on the natural environment and waterways and on the capacity of infrastructure and the road network.**

- This clause was meant as a bulwark against wholesale destruction of ecological values. Bankstown hasn't seen a development application more destructive of the natural environment in decades.

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The Society believes that Council should not be party to an agreement with a developer who wants to spread vast amounts of fill over the floodplain. Council should withdraw from the VPA and renegotiate better protections for the ecological values of Riverlands. #

## **How urban bushland improves our health and why planners need to listen**

by *Pierre Horowitz, Professor, School of Science, Edith Cowan University.*

(From “The Conversation”, 5-5-2017)

Urban bushland has health benefits beyond being a great place to go for a walk. Planners need to consider these when making decisions about the future of our cities. It filters our air and water, helps cities avoid extremes in temperatures, and is linked to lower rates of chronic disease. But these and other health benefits are virtually never accounted for in local and state land development processes. Urban planners need to consider these health benefits when making decisions about the future of our cities.

Urban bushland ranges from a bush park of native trees, to wetlands – in fact any native vegetation characteristic of the local region. With its undisturbed soils and associated wildlife, urban bushland is more diverse than other types of green spaces in our cities, like parks. So it adds significantly to neighbourhood biodiversity. The more unfragmented the landscape, or unaltered the bushland, the more likely it will be to retain its biodiversity. Hills, watercourses and gullies, or a mixed forest, have greater biodiversity than flat land or a plantation of trees. Landscapes that change by the season add to that diversity.

The health benefits of green

spaces (and urban bushland) partly comes from this biodiversity. In cities, health benefits work at two levels. Not only do local residents receive health benefits when they use urban green spaces, the wider urban population also feels the health effects. The closer residents live to green space, particularly if it is accessible or usable, the better they report their health. For an individual, access to green spaces contributes in multiple ways: it reduces stress, it helps us recover from illness or injury, and our thinking abilities improve when we are more contemplative and mindful of our green surroundings.

Our health improves when we use green spaces for physical exercise. And we benefit from the social engagement involved in caring for them. The quality of green spaces plays a role in the health benefits for locals. For example, views of diverse vegetation more effectively lowers stress compared with less-diverse vegetation. Exposure to biodiversity from the air, water, soils, vegetation, wildlife and landscape, and all the microbes associated with them (the sort retained in uncleared bushland and wetlands) enhances our immunity. This is thought to be the key to the health benefits of nature.

The relationship between health benefits and living close to urban green spaces, including urban bushland, might be interpreted as being an effect of wealth. We know wealthier people tend to live in greener suburbs and wealthier people

tend to be healthier. But many studies take wealth into account, with the weight of evidence suggesting a direct health benefit from exposure to biodiversity. So if the health benefits are due to the urban green spaces itself (and not related to wealth), they should be spread more evenly across the population. Perhaps the health of poorer city dwellers will improve by living near to diverse green spaces, like bushland. Failing to provide access to nature entrenches health inequalities.

Urban bushland provides health benefits not just for local residents but for the whole city. Forests and woodlands clean our urban air by removing particles and absorbing carbon dioxide. This reduces premature death, acute respiratory symptoms and asthma exacerbation across the city. A recent review highlights the host of physical health problems that are reduced in urban areas with more nature, including less heart disease, obesity and diabetes. Mental health is also improved in urban areas where people are living with more green space.

Urban bushland improves city water. Wetlands and the vegetation around them clean our water by filtering, reducing exposure to pollutants carried in groundwater or surface water run-off. Vegetation also moderates extremes of temperature providing shade when it is hot and less exposure when it's cold and so reduces heat- or cold-related illnesses.

Where new suburbs are developed on the outskirts of

(cont. page 6)

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cities, the end result is usually near-complete clearing. Urban bushland is replaced with smaller, fragmented, more sanitised, open and neat spaces. These are designed for a narrower (but still important) set of usable attributes, like a bike path, lawns and a playground. But the original values of the bushland are lost. This pattern is repeated in the expanding suburbs of cities across Australia. If some urban

bushland, wetlands or other landscape assets have been retained, the pressure on them from development is relentless, as seen recently in Western Australia where a highway is due to be extended through the Beeliar Wetlands.

Planning processes need to use ways to assess what we might lose and what we might gain from clearing bushland. This could involve asking what types of services existing bushland provide for local residents and the city in general. These will include their role in providing clean air and water, controlling floods, cycling nutrients, as well as their recreational or spiritual services. These could be compared with services the proposed

development offers. The comparison should make decision makers, and more importantly the public, better able to judge the true worth or cost of a development.

Such cost-benefit analyses are usually used somewhere in planning processes but rarely, if ever, are the values of biodiversity and ecosystem services considered, or the cost savings from health benefits of bushland. These sorts of cost-benefit analyses can also be used to account for the health effects associated with local bushland. Such health assessments (or health impact assessments) need to be more widely used. And where land subdivision, road building and suburban housing developments are planned, health assessments may need to be compulsory to better account for the contribution of urban bushland to health. #



## Canterbury-Bankstown Aims for net Zero Emissions

by Skye Virgin

Canterbury – Bankstown Council proposes a net zero emissions target in the LGA by the year 2050 and intends running a community event to explain the issues addressing this. According to Council's website: *“Council recognises the need to take urgent action to reduce emissions as a priority, and also to adapt our actions and operations to reduce the impact on our environment and build the resilience of staff and the community now and into the future... We have endorsed*

*the Resilient Sydney Strategy and are working with Councils across Sydney to encourage our communities to adapt and thrive in a changing climate.”*

Council plans to change to LED street lighting and to increase the Urban Tree Canopy: *“The effect of increasing urbanisation and global climate change are closely linked with the urban heat island effect. When compared to unvegetated public areas, a well-managed, lush tree canopy can reduce land surface temperatures by up to 15 degrees on a 35-degree day. We actively encourage the community to green their properties by planting trees and shrubs. Each year council provides over*

*10,000 native plants free to schools and community members.”*

The Society has written to Council in support of its emissions plan and to state the importance of retaining remnant trees and bush. We've asked Council to address the allowance of minimal offsets between neighbouring apartments resulting in increased canopy loss; the desirability of retaining remnant indigenous trees and the need to prevent dumping at local reserves where fencing is inadequate and also the need for Environment Protection zoning for the LGA's ecologically significant bushland. #



**Check out BANKSTOWN  
BUSHLAND SOCIETY on  
FACEBOOK**

Join us on Bankstown Bushland Society Facebook for postings and discussion of information and activities relevant to the natural environment and flora and fauna of our area. All with an interest in the Georges River and its bushland are welcome.

***ELECTRONIC BULLETINS***

The Bushland Bulletin is available to subscribers in hard copy or digital form or both. To obtain a digital copy all you have to do is send your email address to the Editor (see front cover).



**With CBC BUSHCARE:**

**Bush regen at Monash Reserve, East Hills:**  
Meet in the car park off Henry Lawson Drive, every fourth Tuesday of the month from 9.30 am to 12.00 noon.

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**BUSHWALK**

**Cedar Loop Track in Royal National Park:**  
Meet in the Red Cedar Flat car park off Lady Wakehurst Drive at 10 am on Saturday 8th May. For details contact Col Gibson on 97886232.

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Keep an eye out on Bankstown Bushland Society Facebook for notices of other activities during the year.

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**MEETINGS**

Bushland Society meetings are normally held at Padstow Progress Hall, Ryan Road Padstow, on the 3rd Wednesday of the month (except December & January) in the WAL BROWNING MEETING ROOM at the rear of hall. **HOWEVER**, due to **CORONAVIRUS** restrictions, meetings will not be held at the Hall until further notice. In the meantime meetings will take place at private residences. Members wanting to attend need to give notice to Secretary **Chris Dewhurst** on **cdewhurst2626@gmail.com** or ring **Skye** on **0411584295**.

**BANKSTOWN  
BUSHLAND  
SOCIETY  
COMMITTEE for 2021**

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# JOIN THE BUSHLAND SOCIETY




Bankstown Bushland Society is an incorporated association under the Associations Incorporation Act (NSW) 1984.

We are Bankstown's only incorporated association dedicated to protecting our City's environment.


The Society's objects are:

- To protect the environment of Bankstown
- To assist other persons in the protection of the environment in Bankstown
- To foster better community awareness of environmental issues
- To lobby through Government, commercial and other persons for the maintenance of a high quality of life through the progressive improvement of the environment

Bankstown Bushland Society has lobbied effectively for the protection of bushland and the natural environment since 1988. With your support we can continue the work. By joining the Society you can make an important contribution to our local environment.



<p>I wish to join <b><i>Bankstown Bushland Society Inc:</i></b></p> <p>Name: _____</p> <p>Address: _____</p> <p>Suburb: _____ Postcode _____</p> <p>Telephone No. _____</p> <p>Email: _____</p>	<p><b>Membership fees</b></p> <p>Family/Group - \$20          Ordinary - \$15          Concession - \$10          "student/unwaged/pensioner"</p>
<p>Attached please find my payment of:          _____ (\$ .00)          (amount in words)</p>	<p>Send payment to:  <b>The Secretary,          Bankstown Bushland Society Inc.          PO Box 210          Panania NSW 2213</b></p> <p><b>Or pay by direct transfer to          BSB 512 170 Account Number 100087319, AND put          your name on the transfer form.          Enquiries: <a href="mailto:greenaissance1@gmail.com">greenaissance1@gmail.com</a></b></p>

	<p><b>Bankstown Bushland Society          Inc.          PO Box 210          Panania NSW 2213</b></p>	
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